

the United States than there were at the beginning of the gulf war. Everything that the United States had at stake at the beginning of the gulf war is still on the line, even more so. Americans consume 17 million barrels of oil a day, and today over 50 percent of that consumption is imported from foreign sources.

Last year, a Department of Commerce study revealed that the Nation's reliance on foreign oil was a threat to our national security, because it increases our vulnerability to oil supply interruptions.

Mr. Speaker, foreign oil dependency can be alleviated. One way would be to allow our Nation's industry more access to promising areas offshore. Our Government also must lift unnecessary and burdensome regulations that provide no environmental benefits but cost American jobs and drive our oil and gas industry overseas.

Congress must take the lead in developing a Federal energy policy that encourages rather than punishes domestic oil and gas production. As the world's leader, America must learn from history's mistakes rather than repeat them. This is a job's issue, it is a national security issue, and time is not on our side.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GUNDERSON). The Chair will entertain three more 1-minutes on each side.

URGING SUPPORT OF THE ESSENTIAL AIR SERVICE, A PROGRAM IMPORTANT TO RURAL AMERICA

(Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, as we begin the fiscal year 1997 appropriations process, I'd like to call your attention to a small but important program to rural America—the Essential Air Service. EAS was created in the early 1980's to provide assistance to small communities, and to maintain an integrated, national air service network. Air service is vital to rural communities, it is their link to the rest of the world.

Over the past several years, funding for EAS has steadily decreased, falling victim to an urban-dominated Congress, and budget cuts.

Therefore, I've introduced an alternative to the EAS, the Small Community Air Service Act. My bill, H.R. 2881 would allow States to charge a small fee on passenger tickets to fund an EAS-type program. It would be designed by the State, and for the State. I believe my bill is a viable alternative to the current program.

I ask my colleagues to seriously consider H.R. 2881. And as we continue the appropriations process I ask for your support of EAS.

THE UNITED STATES MUST MINIMIZE ITS DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL

(Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, 5 years after the Persian Gulf war, the United States still imports 9 million barrels of oil. In fact, our Nation is more dependent on foreign oil than ever before. More than 50 percent of our oil is imported, and about 20 percent comes from the Persian Gulf. While we may never completely eliminate our dependence on foreign oil, we must minimize our reliance on foreign sources from the volatile Middle East. We should look more toward our neighbors and trading partners in the Western Hemisphere, like Venezuela, which has made significant investment in the United States and recently opened its oil industry to investment by U.S. companies.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to move toward a policy that encourages domestic oil and gas exploration and production, to ensure a vibrant and healthy economy.

AMERICA MUST WORK TOWARD ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

(Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, on this historic fifth anniversary of the Persian Gulf war, the lessons seem clear: America must work toward energy independence. But, this Nation seems to be ignoring the lessons of the past and heading in exactly the wrong direction—toward over dependence on foreign energy sources.

As leaders, we must make every effort to help America's oil and gas industry thrive. By helping the American oil and gas industry thrive, we will create new jobs, more revenues and increased national security. But we must unleash this strategic industry from its regulatory noose. Currently, instead of cutting down on bureaucratic regulations, the administration and some in Congress have proposed more than \$14 billion in new industry regulations that would take effect over the next 5 years.

My colleagues on the House Resources Committee seem to understand these costs. Today, they will markup a bill, the Oil and Gas Royalty Fairness and Implication Act, that makes sense. It cuts through the bureaucracy and provides certainty, simplicity, fairness and efficiency in royalty collection. This is something that industry and the administration can agree on. I hope we can too.

It is time to free America's oil and gas industry from over regulations so that this Nation can be free from its foreign oil dependency.

IT IS TIME SOME REPUBLICANS IN THIS BODY GOT RELIGION AND SUPPORTED EDUCATION

(Mr. JACKSON of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I represent the Second Congressional District of Illinois, where education is considered sacred. This Nation should have no higher priority than to educate its populace. Senator DOLE and a majority of the Republicans in the Senate voted 84 to 16 on Tuesday to restore funding for key education and job training programs. Now that Senator DOLE is candidate DOLE, he has religion. Yet, in this body, there is still a majority in the majority who are determined to cut funding for basic education and math skills, cut funding for safe and drug-free schools, cut funding for vocational education, and that is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, education helps preserve family values. Education is the cornerstone of our democracy. It is good for business. It is good for meaningful, well-paying, and socially useful jobs. Education aids economic growth and keeps us competitive in the global marketplace, adds quality to a person's life, and enhances one's self-image. A mind, Mr. Speaker, is a terrible thing to waste. It is time some Republicans in this body got religion and supported the full funding of education.

PASO ROBLES MAKES TOP 50 LIST OF SMALL TOWNS TO LIVE IN

(Mrs. SEASTRAND asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SEASTRAND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Paso Robles, a beautiful small town on the central coast of California.

Recently in its April issue, Money magazine described Paso Robles as one of "America's 50 Hottest Little Boomtowns."

Paso Robles, a computer-age company town with tremendous growth potential—just a few miles north of California's commercial space port is considered one of the 50 best towns to live and work because of its growing promise of jobs in its electronics manufacturing and winery industry.

The Money magazine article ranked Paso Robles 43 out of 50 best places to live based on the city's projected population growth of 12 percent, its attractive median income and typical home cost.

I proudly salute Paso Robles and its citizens and encourage them to take pride in the fact that it is truly one of America's best kept secrets.